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Why airpower alone cannot topple Tehran's regime

MD REZWANUL ALAM

"The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting" (Sun Tzu). These words by Sun Tzu have been regarded as the gold standard of strategy throughout history. Yet in the escalating war between the US-Israeli alliance and Iran, the art of diplomacy appears to be discarded in favor of brute force. However, those advocating for regime change in Iran often fail to acknowledge the reality on the ground. The Islamic Republic has spent four decades preparing for this exact scenario. Toppling a regime woven into the fabric of Iranian society and regional geography is not a simple surgical strike. It is a highly complex task.

Iran's regime has various layers of state institutions, which include the supreme leader, the Guardian Council, the Assembly of Experts, the Expediency Council, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). This complex structure was built to withstand immense pressure and absorb shocks. Iran's constitution outlines a clear path of succession in case of a sudden leadership loss. So, eliminating its top leadership in a massive air campaign will not result in an immediate collapse of the Islamic regime.

While some strategists look at Venezuela-style regime-capture as a blueprint for rapid regime change in Iran, they fail to acknowledge the fundamental structural differences between the two. Unlike Venezuela, which relied on personalist loyalty and transactional military, Iran is a highly institutionalized state. Its broader security apparatuses are not merely protecting the supreme leader; they are the guardians of a 47-year-old ideological mission. Their loyalty is woven into the country's economic, political, and religious fabric through a process of decades-long indoctrination. Decapitating the Iranian leadership will not collapse the system, but it will activate a deeply entrenched power structure that views its survival as a divine mandate.

There is consensus among scholars that the Islamic Republic can be dismantled in two ways: by deploying ground forces or by a popular uprising from within. But both of these options seem strategically improbable at this moment.

After decades of endless wars and squandered resources, the US public has very little appetite for getting involved in another major war. The current Trump administration came to power promising the American public that it would keep the country away from forever wars. But Trump's apparent U-turn in this regard has split his MAGA support base. A recent poll conducted by Reuters Ipsos shows that only a quarter of Americans support attacks on Iran. Rising energy prices due to the escalating conflict may complicate the Republican Party's chances in the ongoing midterm elections. So, it is unlikely the Trump administration would risk sending US troops on the ground in Iran under such conditions.

Another avenue the US can explore is arming separatists in Iran to act as their foot soldiers. Five Kurdish separatist groups headquartered in northern Iraq created a united front against the Islamic regime in Tehran on February 22, 2026. The CIA had already started training the Iranian Kurds even before active hostility began. However, the amount of time needed to train Kurdish rebels in significant numbers to be effective against regime forces means it is unlikely they can act in the near future. The effort is reminiscent of Iraqi Kurdish efforts at the height of the US moves against the Saddam Hussein regime in the 1990s. Needless to say, it did not go well for the Iraqi Kurds.

An overwhelming uprising by the Iranian people from within can melt away the Islamic regime. This is the reason why Trump and Netanyahu have been calling on the Iranian people to 'take back their country' from the regime since the start of the confrontation. So far, the calls have failed to draw widespread public support. It is partly because the Trump administration failed to deliver on its promise last time when the Iranian people rose against the regime in January 2026. As a result, as many as 2000 protesters lost their lives.

Another reason why the Iranian people are hesitant to answer calls for a national uprising is best explained by Robert Pape, a political scientist at the University of Chicago. He termed the phenomenon as "escalation trap." The logic of regime change through only airpower is essentially flawed. Tactical victory often yields the opposite of its intended political goals. In this case, the US-Israeli bombing campaigns are acting as a catalyst for nationalism. It is strengthening the bond between the Islamic regime and the public against a common foreign enemy. This shows the dual reality of the Iranian people: while many may hate the regime, they fear foreign intervention more.

If the goal of the Trump administration is to subdue the enemy without fighting, the current air campaign and rhetoric are achieving the exact opposite. By sidelining diplomacy, the current administration risks a repeat of past failures, where external intervention only strengthened the very structures it sought to destroy. Until there is a strategy that acknowledges the reality of Iranian nationalism and state structure, the victory will remain out of reach.

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Reflections on scientific indications in the holy Quran

MD SAIFUL ISLAM MASUM

In modern intellectual discourse, science and religion are frequently portrayed as two opposing frameworks for understanding reality. Scientific reasoning is often associated with empirical evidence and rational inquiry, while religion is perceived as belonging to the realm of faith and metaphysical belief. Yet within the intellectual tradition of Islam, the relationship between faith and reason has historically been defined not by conflict but by complementarities. The Holy Quran, the central religious text of Islam, stands as a remarkable example of this synthesis. Though primarily a book of spiritual guidance, ethical instruction, and moral philosophy, it contains numerous reflections on the natural world that continue to intrigue scholars and scientists alike. For many observers, these reflections appear as scientific indications-statements about nature that resonate strikingly with discoveries made centuries later.

The Quran was revealed in seventh-century Arabia, a society where scientific institutions, experimental laboratories, and systematic research traditions had not yet developed in the form we recognize today. Despite this historical context, the Quran repeatedly invites its readers to observe, contemplate, and investigate the universe. Rather than discouraging inquiry, it encourages intellectual curiosity. This spirit is captured in one of the most profound Quranic statements on knowledge: "Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'" (Quran 39:9). Such verses suggest that the pursuit of knowledge is not merely permissible in Islam but deeply valued.

The Quran's engagement with the natural world is particularly evident in its cosmological descriptions. Several passages reflect upon the origins and structure of the universe in language that evokes modern scientific thought. One of the most widely cited verses states: "Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were once a joined entity, and We separated them, and We made from water every living thing?" (Quran 21:30). While the Quran does not offer a detailed cosmological theory, many contemporary interpreters note that the idea of the heavens and earth emerging from a unified state bears conceptual resemblance to modern cosmological models that describe the universe as originating from a highly dense and unified point.

Beyond cosmology, the Quran also contains numerous references to the formation of the Earth and the balance of natural systems. In several passages, mountains are described as stabilizing structures within the Earth's landscape: "And He placed firmly set mountains upon the earth lest it should shake with you" (Quran 16:15). Some commentators interpret this imagery in light of modern geological knowledge, which recognizes the role of mountain ranges and tectonic structures in stabilizing the Earth's crust and maintaining geological equilibrium.

Equally fascinating are the Quran's reflections on hydrological processes. Long before modern meteorology described the water cycle in detail, the Quran referred to the movement of water through evaporation, cloud formation, rainfall, and subterranean storage. One verse notes: "And We sent down water from the sky in due measure, then We lodged it in the earth, and indeed, We are able to take it away" (Quran 23:18). Another passage describes the formation of rain clouds: "Do you not see that Allah drives the clouds, then joins them together, then makes them into a mass, and you see the rain emerge from within them?" (Quran 24:43). Such verses demonstrate a remarkable awareness of natural cycles that sustain life on Earth.

The Quran also highlights the role of water as the fundamental basis of life. Modern biology recognizes that water is essential for all known forms of life, and the Quran expresses a similar concept centuries earlier: "And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?" (Quran 21:30). This emphasis on water's central role in life reflects a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of natural systems.

In addition to physical phenomena, the Quran frequently directs human attention toward the intricate order of the universe. One verse states: "The sun and the moon move according to precise calculation" (Quran 55:5). Another describes the orderly motion of celestial bodies: "It is He who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon; each floating in an orbit" (Quran 21:33). Such verses highlight the concept of cosmic order, a principle that lies at the heart of modern physics and astronomy.

Yet it is crucial to understand the nature of these scientific indications within the broader framework of Islamic thought. The Quran does not present itself as a scientific textbook, nor does it attempt to replace empirical research. Instead, it offers a philosophical and spiritual lens through which humanity can reflect upon the natural world. The aim is not to provide technical explanations but to inspire contemplation of the Creator's wisdom as reflected in creation.

Understanding the complementary nature of science and religion is essential in this discussion. Science seeks to explain how the universe functions through observation and experimentation. Religion, by contrast, addresses questions of meaning, purpose, and moral guidance. When properly understood, these domains do not compete with one another; rather, they illuminate different dimensions of reality.

In a world where debates between science and religion often become polarized, the Quran offers an alternative perspective-one in which faith and reason coexist harmoniously. The scientific indications found within its verses do not seek to replace scientific inquiry; rather, they inspire curiosity and intellectual humility. They remind humanity that the search for knowledge is both an intellectual and a spiritual journey.

Ultimately, the significance of these reflections lies not in proving individual scientific theories but in cultivating a mindset that values exploration, learning, and wonder. By encouraging humanity to study the heavens, examine the earth, and reflect upon the origins of life, the Quran nurtures a worldview in which knowledge becomes a bridge between the material and the spiritual. In that sense, the dialogue between science and faith becomes not a conflict of narratives but a shared quest to understand the profound mysteries of existence.

The writer is a banker

Embracing time, trust and humanity

MOHAMMAD MUSUDUR RAHMAN

Late one warm evening in Dhaka, Rehman, a respected, silver-haired CEO of a family-owned textile firm, sat on his verandah alone. Through an open window came the haunting strains of Lata Mangeshkar's Lag Ja Gale - "Lag ja gale ke phir yeh haseen raat ho na ho, Shayad phir is janam mein mulaqaat ho na ho." In English: "Come embrace me, for this beautiful night may not return; perhaps we may never meet again in this lifetime." The melody, a classic from 1960s Bollywood, carried across the city's twilight. Usually stoic, Rehman felt a lump in his throat. He recalled the countless late nights he'd spent at the office, the school plays and family dinners he'd missed. He thought of his college friend and co-founder, who had died unexpectedly the year before - their last conversation a rushed "How are you?" on a blustery night. They both assumed there'd be a "next week," but it never came.

From inside, Rehman's elderly mother hummed along to the song. He remembered how she and his late father used to treasure simple moments together after surviving the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. His father often said that in uncertain times, "today" was the only guarantee. Now, as "phir yeh raat ho na ho" echoed in the air, Rehman felt that truth sharply: no matter one's power or plans, each moment is a gift, and some opportunities never return.

He sighed, put aside the late-night emails he was about to send, and picked up his phone. Instead of business reports, he called his son, who was studying abroad, and simply asked how he was. He realized that missing family dinners and storytelling hours was far more important tonight than quarterly results. He then rang an old colleague to ask how she and her family had fared during the pandemic. These were small "embraces" across distances-gestures of presence and human connection. As the song faded, Rehman made a vow: in his personal life and his leadership style, he would honor the present instead of endlessly deferring life to some future "later."

Rehman's story is fictional, but it reflects a truth every leader eventually encounters: time is fleeting, and moments of grace wait for no one. Across South Asia, poems and proverbs remind us to seize the day. This wisdom is not merely romantic sentiment; it carries practical meaning in boardrooms and policy chambers alike. The COVID-19 pandemic offered a powerful reminder of impermanence, disrupting decades of planning overnight. One day leaders were finalizing five-year strategies; the next, a global crisis demanded immediate reinvention. Those who navigated the turmoil best were often the ones who stayed present and responsive. They noticed unease in an employee's voice during a virtual meeting or sensed subtle shifts in customer behavior before they became headlines. Presence, in this sense, becomes a strategic advantage.

One way to honor the present is to value quality of time over quantity. Rabindranath Tagore once wrote that our lives should "dance on the edges of time like dew on the tip of a leaf." His words capture how fragile and beautiful life's moments are. For a CEO, this might mean stepping away from spreadsheets to spend time on the factory floor or listening patiently to an employee navigating personal hardship. For policymakers, it means visiting communities and hearing citizens' stories firsthand rather than relying solely on reports. These interactions may seem small, but they cultivate trust, insight, and loyalty-assets that no financial projection can measure.

The heart of Lag Ja Gale is a plea to connect deeply while one still can. In leadership terms, this speaks directly to emotional intelligence: the ability to recognize and honor emotions in ourselves and others. Although discussing "love" in professional settings may sound unusual, effective leadership often grows from genuine care-for a vision, for people, and for society. Research consistently shows that emotionally intelligent leaders build stronger teams and foster higher engagement. In fast-evolving economies like Bangladesh, where tradition and modernization coexist, empathy and emotional awareness are becoming competitive advantages rather than optional traits.

As Rehman reflected on the passing night, he also began thinking about legacy. Many South Asian enterprises are family-run, yet surprisingly few prepare systematically for succession. Globally, only about 30 percent of family businesses survive into the second generation and far fewer reach the third. Without careful planning, both wealth and relationships can fracture. Emotional intelligence in leadership includes addressing these transitions early-mentoring successors, building trust, and ensuring that values travel alongside assets. Leaders who begin these conversations while time allows often leave behind organizations that are not only profitable but united.

Ultimately, the timeless refrain of the song offers a universal leadership lesson: cherish the present and the people around you, because neither will last forever. Leadership is often described as guiding organizations toward the future, but it is equally about honoring the present moment. When leaders combine empathy with urgency, they inspire loyalty, resilience, and purpose. In that sense, the wisdom carried in an old song drifting through a Dhaka evening becomes surprisingly practical. To embrace the moment-to truly say lag ja gale-is to lead with humanity. And in the brief time we share, that may be the most enduring legacy any leader can leave behind.

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